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An exploration of gender and disability in the workplace

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An exploration of gender and disability in the workplace

Abstract

Intro: Intersectionality argues that individuals who have multiple minority identities, such as gender and disability, have been found to experience unique difficulties in socio-cultural environments, such as employment. Statistics show that women with disabilities have been found to experience more difficulties in securing employment and more disadvantages once in employment compared to non-disabled women. This study aims to further our understanding of the intersection between gender and disability in terms of both recruitment and mainstream employment in the United Kingdom.

Method: This cross sectional, qualitative study was based on semi-structured interviews with seven women, who had various physical disabilities and had experience of various types of mainstream employment.

Findings: Thematic analysis identified numerous themes based on the experiences discussed in the interview data: 1) *discrimination* in recruitment processes, 2) *career changes* as a result of individual impairments, 3) *accessibility* to work environment, and 4) *support*, which was a central theme to emerge split between: a) *support given* which included accommodations and co-worker support, and b) *support needed* which centralised on the current lack of understanding and empathy the disabled women experienced in employment.

Discussion: The specific work environment can impact on the type of experiences disabled women face and the difficulties experienced resulted from a combination of accessibility issues, lack of support and the limitations of the women's disabilities. Difficulties attributed to disabilities in the workplace were found to be enhanced by experiences specific to women, such as pregnancy.

Conclusion: Overall, it appears that although there is evidence that the intersection of disabled women's combined identities affected their experiences, disability was arguably the more salient identity. Furthermore, it appears that the disabled women's self-identity was often in conflict with projected stereotypical social-identities, especially in certain socio-cultural employment environments. Career changes due to impairment, accessibility to workplace and a lack of support were the most shared experiences across the interviews.

Chapter 1: Introduction

This chapter provides the foundation of the dissertation with the first section considers the labels of gender and disability, then the definitions of gender and disability, discuss the main models of disability and finally explores the statistics of women with disabilities. The second section introduces the theoretical framework of intersectionality and explains how it applies to this research. The third section introduces the research conducted and discusses the objectives of the study, and the final section will outline the remaining structure of the dissertation.

1.1. Women with disabilities in employment

When discussing identities it is important to consider how labels such as ‘disability’ or ‘woman’, can result in individuals being appraised on their categorical membership to these labels rather than their individual qualities (Goffman, 1963). Labels can result in specific behaviours and attitudes being attributed (also known as a schema) to an individual’s particular identity, which can be hard to change and can result in stereotypes (Kulik and Bainbridge, 2006, p. 27). Morales et al. (2015) argues that the stereotypes attached to a person’s gender are affected by the social rules assigned to men and women; this includes stereotypical assumptions of masculinity and femininity.

Defining gender is problematic as there are numerous arguments as to what constitutes gender. Judith Butler, an influential feminist, argues that ‘gender is in no way a stable identity’, but is an ‘identity tenuously constituted in time - an identity instituted through a *stylised repetition of acts*’ (Butler, 1988, p. 519). However, this suggests that no identities are stable because they are all performative, whereas Morales et al. (2015) argues that gender is a result of the social rules attached to men and women, which are historically and culturally specific. These definitions of gender demonstrate the differences between an individual’s performative self-identity (Butler’s definition), and

projected norms and rules of a social identity (Morales et al. definition). Knights (2015) argues that gender distinctions are actualized with binary thinking which allows for the reflection and reinforcement of 'discriminatory and hierarchical judgements' (p. 203) particularly in the context of employment. Binaries refer to the distinctions of opposed meaning when they are made real, thus reflecting and resulting in the reinforcement of discriminatory and hierarchical based judgements (Knights, 2015, p. 203). Scholars have found that dominant gender work cultures can be hard to break into, which has been found to have an impact on women who work in management with masculine dominated positions. For example Priola and Brannan's (2009) qualitative research found that women managers felt that the instilled masculine culture prevented their career progression. 'The only form of resistance enacted by the women interviewed was *withdrawal*; either by changing organization, moving to self-employment or by rejecting opportunities for promotions' (Priola and Brannan, 2009, p. 392).

The definition of disability has also received attention and the World Health Organisation (WHO) state that 'disability is an umbrella term, covering impairments, activity limitations, and participation restrictions' (WHO, 2015). The WHO stresses that a disability is not wholly a health problem but is also an environmental and social one, whereby restrictions in society result in barriers. The various models of disability differ in the way they view the causes and 'remedies' to overcome the issues that accompany a disability. According to Palmer and Harley (2012) there are three major models¹ which distinguish different approaches to disability studies: *the medical model*, *the social model* and *the social-relational model*. *The medical model* reduces disability down to the impairment of an individual, resulting in the loss of bodily and social functioning (Grue, 2011, p. 540). *The social model* disagrees with the medical model and views disability as a social construct which emphasises that a disability is a result of

¹ See Palmer and Harley (2012) for more information on the models of disability

the limitations in society that make a person's disability disabling (Hughes and Paterson, 1997; Oliver, 1990). Thomas (2006) supports the final *social relational model*, which argues that a disability is a result of both societal attitudes and the individual's impairment, emphasising the interaction of both the personal and the social. The research conducted for this dissertation is more aligned with the social relational model of disability which, although similar to the social model, emphasises the interaction of the limitations of individuals' impairment with the limitations in society.

Research has tended to view the disabled as a single category, and as a result there is very little qualitative research which explores intersecting identities that can co-exist with disability. Among these an important identity worth exploring in its intersectionality with disability is gender (Begum, 1992). Begum (1992), a feminist writer, discusses the lack of research that considered the experiences of the intersection of gender and disability and emphasised that disabled women face two types of discrimination, ableism and sexism, what some researchers have referred to as double disadvantage (Traustadottir, 1990; Gerschick, 2000).

In the United Kingdom (UK) over half (55%) of the ten million people who have a disability in England and Wales were women (Office for National Statistics, 2013), and research has revealed that women with disabilities experience more difficulties in employment than disabled men. For example, white women with a disability earn less than women who do not have a disability but also earn less than white men with a disability (Woodhams et al., 2015a). Employment rates are also lower for women who have a disability (38%) than men who have a disability (43%) (Jones and Latrielle, 2011). Additionally having a disability and being a lone parent further reduces the rate of employment to 30% for women (*Work and Disability*, 2015). Alternative routes of employment such as self-employment are also affected, with women with a disability

being far less likely to be self-employed (9%) in comparison to men with a disability (21%) (Jones and Latrielle, 2011).

In exploring the literature that focuses on the intersection of disability and gender, within the context of employment it clearly emerges that this research is mostly quantitative, often based on questionnaire and survey findings or on secondary statistical data. While such research does provide a foundation of knowledge by identifying key issues and patterns of behaviours, it does not further our understanding of disabled women's personal experiences. In fact there is a lack of qualitative research which explores the 'day-to-day experiences of women in the workplace' (Fevre et al., 2013, p. 290), and even less so from the perspective of women with disabilities. As the statistics above show, disabled women face different hardships to non-disabled women and disabled men in the workplace. Therefore, this research adopts the theoretical framework of intersectionality which looks at exploring the unique position in which two or more social identities intersect (i.e. gender and disability), within the socio-cultural context of the workplace.

1.2. Intersectionality

The term intersectionality was first coined by Crenshaw (1989) who discussed how at the time black women were under-represented in research of gender and race, and it has increasingly been developed and used in research when discussing multiple identities. It is now used as 'a theoretical framework for understanding how multiple social identities such as race, gender, sexual orientation, SES (Social Economic Status), and disability intersect at the micro level of individual experience to reflect interlocking systems of privilege and oppression (i.e. racism, sexism, heterosexism, classism) at the macro social-structural level' (Bowleg, 2012, p. 1267). Bowleg (2008) suggests that a person's intersectional identity experiences involve numerous constructed realities rather than

just one single reality. Consequently, this research adopts what McCall (2005) identifies as an intracategorical complexity element, which focuses on social groups whose particular intersectionality has been neglected (in this research gender and disability) ‘to reveal the complexity of lived experience within such groups’ (McCall, 2005, p. 1774).

Despite academic interest in intersectionality there remains a paucity of qualitative research that has investigated disabled women’s personal experiences within the socio-cultural context of employment especially within the UK. Kang and Bodenhausen’s (2015) recent literature review on the intersection of multiple identities demonstrates that studies have mainly focused on gender and race; although they recommend that future research should consider different identities. Corlett and Mavin (2014, p. 273) recommend that future social constructionist research on intersectionality should consider how individuals describe their intersecting identities, and their experiences, with emphasis on exploring the particular challenges and benefits of these intersections. Additionally future research should look at how individuals experience and construct their self-identity at these intersections, especially within their socio-cultural contexts, looking at how power and privilege shape their identity.

1.3.Main focus of the current research

This research is an exploratory study using a qualitative design and employing semi-structured interviews to investigate the intersection of gender and disability, and what impact this has within the socio-cultural context of the workplace. The experiences and opportunities that people with disabilities have can positively, or negatively, impact their self-confidence and their concept of self (Leiulfsrud et al., 2014, p. 1182). Employment is a major part of adult life and research has shown that employment opportunities can enhance disabled individuals skills and ultimately improve their concept of self (Bogart, 2014; Dunn and Burcaw, 2013) and quality of life. Therefore

this research will focus specifically on employment (socio-cultural environment), as we do not know the psychological impact or the individual upheavals that accompany the statistics that demonstrate how women with disabilities face difficulties in gaining employment. Individuals with disabilities can seek work in the open labour market, known as mainstream employment, or alternative forms such as self-employment or supported employment. Supported employment can include organisations such as sheltered workshops, which only employ disabled workers, and have been funded by the government to give access to employment to people with physical or mental disabilities (Cimeria, 2011).

The particular demographic of women with disabilities was chosen as I have personally known many women with different types of disabilities in many different settings: family members, colleagues and service users of an organisation where I volunteered. Personal interactions with these women with disabilities has suggested that this particular demographic have interesting experiences to share which differ depending on their interpretations, experiences, and beliefs surrounding their disability.

1.3.1. Objectives

This study aims to explore the intersection of gender and disability identity/ies to enhance our understanding of disabled women's employment experiences in the UK.

This study's objectives are to explore:

1. The specific issues and experiences of women with disabilities during recruitment processes and what impact these experiences have,
2. The specific issues and experiences of women with disabilities once employment has been secured and what impact these experiences have,
3. What support is available for women with disabilities in employment and what support is needed by them.

The majority of intersectionality research has repeatedly explored the intersection of gender and race, which is now being criticised because it limits the scope and generalisability of intersectional research which heavily focuses on two specific identities (Nash, 2008, p. 9). This study will contribute to intersectional theory by exploring additional intersecting identities that accompany gender; looking specifically at the intersectionality of being a white woman and being physically disabled, and what impact this has on their experiences of employment (socio-cultural environment). The experiences which are explored in the semi-structured interviews, held with seven women with physical disabilities, include securing, maintaining and leaving employment. Furthermore this study will highlight examples of the currently received level of support and draw attention to areas of support which need developing. This may benefit organisations and women with disabilities by highlighting potential avenues for change in order to secure additional support and assurances for current and future disabled employees.

1.4.Dissertation structure

The dissertation will be structured as follows: chapter 2 will review current literature on the importance of researching gender and disability, moving on to focus on present intersectionality research on gender and disability, before finally considering the separate research for gender and disability in employment. Chapter 3 will describe the methods chosen to collect and analyse the research data, provide an overview of the participants, and discuss the ethical issues. Chapter 4 will present and discuss the findings of the research, and the final chapter will provide a summary of the dissertation and a conclusion.

Chapter 2: Literature review

This literature review will explore the current research on disabled women in employment, beginning by exploring how key feminist writers have argued that their own experiences and research on disabled women highlights the constraints and issues that disabled women face. This first section then discusses and critiques recent intersectionality research on gender and disability identifying what we currently know about disabled women's experiences. The second section summarises recent findings on the experiences of women and disabled individuals when trying to secure and maintain employment. The final section will review research on support and considers the impact recent changes have had on disabled women. This literature review brings together our current understanding of experiences and issues across a range of research looking at employment and 'disadvantaged' social groups and whilst highlighting the current gaps in knowledge about disabled women in employment.

2. 1. Gender and Disability

Research that explores the intersection of gender and disability emerged largely in the 1990s when feminist writers worked to rebalance the male dominated models of disability (Thomas, 1999). However research completed in the 1990s, including research by Jenny Morris (1989, 1991, 1992, 1993a, 1993b, 1993c, 1995), explores the experiences, and often self-experiences, of being a disabled woman across a number of different life situations. Begum (1992) also draws on her own personal experience as a disabled woman, discussing how gender and disability are social constructions and how 'both roles available to disabled women label us as inferior, passive and weak' (Begum, 1992, p. 72). Morris' (1991) work has been influential in drawing attention to the prejudice women (and men) with disabilities face from non-disabled individuals; she argues this has a profound impact on disabled women's interactions with society

because of the hidden assumptions about their lives. Morris (1991, p. 126) argues that ‘Our disability frightens people... Having put up clear barriers between us and them, non-disabled people further hide their fear and discomfort by turning us into objects of pity, comforting themselves by their own kindness and generosity’. She further argues that ‘It is this response which lies at the heart of the discrimination we face — in employment, in housing, in access and not a result of individual inadequacies’ (p. 126). Knights’ (2015) paper on shattering binaries suggested methods to overcome the nature of binaries that are prevalent to women with disabilities. As discussed in the introduction, binary thinking enables stereotypical beliefs and behaviours to be validated, the dissolution of these binaries would allow for a more equal footing for all individuals irrespective of their identity status. Although the dissolution of binaries would be extremely beneficial to the disadvantaged group membership of the *other*, i.e. masculinity – *femininity*, and non-disabled – *disabled*, Knights (2015) concludes that ‘our everyday practices are informed by heavily internalized norms and beliefs’ (p. 206), and those who benefit from the power accrued from these binaries are not likely to relinquish them.

However there have been many developments in the last two decades that have accounted for considerable disruption and changes to disabled individuals’ lives, most notably changing governments in power, the economic downturn, and changes to benefits. The current research will explore whether similar findings are still as prevalent in today’s society, despite increased rights and legislative protection, which although they aim to increase the rights of disabled individuals they also maintain binary thinking. The need and use of legislation reifies the current stereotypical associations of disabled individuals, who are viewed to be at a disadvantage and in need of legal protection in comparison to ‘normal’ able-bodied individuals.

Although recent scholars have explored the intersection of gender and disability to some degree, the scope of these studies have been limited by focussing on aspects of employment that do not explore the everyday practices in the work environment. Alternatively some studies have focused on psychological or economical risk factors associated with the intersection of gender and disability.

2.1.1. Psychological distress and harassment

Individuals who have physical disabilities are also susceptible to experiencing emotional and psychological distress as a result of the impact of their physical conditions, and can develop mental conditions such as depression or stress. Brown's (2014) quantitative cross-sectional study explored the intersectionality of gender, physical disability and psychological risk factors, and found that women are more susceptible to certain risk factors (emotional reliance; perceived devaluation; functional limitation; self-esteem) associated with developing higher depressive symptoms than men. However, several limitations of the questionnaire data such as the high mean age of participants (62, in a range of 40-93) and that the majority of the physical disabilities were age-related illness, such as diabetes and arthritis call for a cautious consideration of these results. Additionally Brown focused on participant's socio-economic status not employment, which limits the applicability of this study to understanding disabled women's experiences of psychological distress specific to the workplace. It does highlight that women are more susceptible to experience psychological distress than men, which could occur whilst in employment, but this finding is limited as the majority of the sample is older and thus the findings may not be transferable to younger physically disabled women. Additionally, although these findings demonstrate slight correlations (less than 0.5) this does not indicate the impact of the findings on the individuals.

Shaw et al. (2012) investigates how intersecting identities are related to harassment in the workplace. They studied a range of workplaces including manufacturing, healthcare, administration and retail and found that the 'highest proportion of harassment complaints... were derived from Hispanic or American Indian women with behavioural disorders, age 36 and older' (p. 87). Specific to the UK Grainger and Fitzner (2006) found that employees were five times more likely to have experienced some form of sexual harassment if they had a disability or long-term illness in comparison to employees who did not have a disability, which demonstrates a more sinister impact of intersecting identities that affects women with disabilities. As already discussed although these findings are informative they does not consider the impact that this harassment has had because it is beyond the scope of the research, but nonetheless demonstrates that there are gaps in our understanding of disabled women's personal experiences of employment.

2.1.2. Socio-economic disadvantage

Quantitative research has investigated more economical impacts of gender and disability, such as comparisons of socio-economic disadvantages or wage discrepancies that disabled women experience in comparison to non-disabled women or disabled men. For example, Kavanagh et al. (2015) explores gender differences across impairments and its impact on socio-economic disadvantage in Australia. Their findings allowed for the authors to claim that overall, individuals with disabilities experienced higher levels of socio-economic disadvantage across all of the variables in comparison to individuals with no disabilities. Furthermore Kavanagh et al. (2015) found that women with disabilities are more likely to be more socio-economically disadvantaged than men. Interestingly men and women are more likely to be similar in terms of socio-economic disadvantage when they have the same impairment type, but women were still less likely to be in paid employment. Women with disabilities were also more likely to

experience multiple socio-economic disadvantages such as low income, not being in paid work, and housing vulnerability. Although the analysis has identified numerous economic disadvantages faced by individuals with disabilities it tells us nothing of how these impact the individual, however it does identify a trend that suggests women face more upheavals than men. This needs to be explored further with regards to personal experiences not just measuring economic and social variables.

Some studies have focussed on a well-known disadvantage across gender and disability that occurs in employment concerning wage differences across intersecting minorities (Woodhams et al., 2015b). Woodhams et al. (2015a, 2015b) explores how membership to multiple disadvantaged identities (i.e. gender, disability and race/ethnicity) impacts wages, and how this differs to widely seen wage gaps across gender. Lower pay was found to result from combinations of identity, such as being female and from an ethnic minority. They found a negative relationship between pay and multiple identities: 'Pay rates fall and pay gaps widen as layers of disadvantage are added' (Woodhams et al., 2015b, p. 290). Although this research informs the reader that intersecting identities can have a negative consequence economically, this does not give any indication of the social impact of the intersecting identities in the workplace as it focuses purely on pay. The research for this dissertation looks at everyday employment experiences of disabled women, specifically exploring the impact of the intersecting identities of gender and disability on everyday employment experiences. This research therefore has a wider scope than Woodhams et al.'s (2015a, 2015b) intersectional research which solely focused on pay disadvantages.

Although these studies demonstrate patterns, or the prevalence of particular issues, across gender and disability they fail to further our understanding of personal experiences of disabled women: nor do they determine if gender and disability identities

intersect to influence everyday employment experiences. The following section will look at the research which has identified a number of barriers and experiences of recruitment and employment for disabled individuals and for women. Although the literature that considers the experiences of disabled individuals and women separately is not indicative of the unique position and experiences of disabled women, they can be used to identify what experiences or barriers are specific to the identities of being a women or being disabled.

2.2. Recruitment

Despite policies and legislation being introduced to prevent discrimination and promote equality in the workplace, such as The Equality Act 2010 (*Disability rights*, 2014), structural and cultural barriers persist (Harris et al, 2014, p. 1277). Both disabled individuals and women can face discrimination based on their social-identities. Research has indicated that discrimination is a dominant feature in disabled individuals' and women's experiences of employment. Disableism is a term that refers to disability discrimination (Harpur, 2014; Harpur, 2012), but some researchers have challenged the binary impact of the word disableism, and have suggested a recent change to use the word ableism. Ableism refers to discrimination in which a 'person experiences unfavourable treatment because they have different abilities' (Harpur, 2014, pp. 1234-1235). Similarly women also face discrimination in the form of sexism which can be benevolent or hostile in nature. Benevolent sexism is more subtle and involves paternalistic behaviour where women are viewed in terms of being stereotypically female such as being weak, inferior and need looking after (Good and Rudman, 2010). Hostile sexism depicts women as inferior and their credibility and performance in the workplace is met with heavy scepticism (Streets and Major, 2014).

For both disabled individuals and women, discrimination can result in either not being called for interviews or unsuccessful interviews, both resulting from an interviewers' belief that the applicant is not suitable for the job based on their identity and not their credentials (disability studies: Vedeler 2014; Brohan et al., 2012, 2014; Lindsay et al., 2014; Burke et al., 2013; Hall and Wilton, 2011; Harris et al., 2014. Gender studies: Howlett et al., 2015; Streets and Major, 2014; Good and Rudman, 2010; Priola and Brannan, 2009).

2.3. Employment

Once employment has been secured, both disabled individuals and women still face many barriers. Disabled individuals face a range of problems such as accommodation issues, which may include not being provided with equipment needed to successfully perform their job role, or that the accommodations needed and/or requested are not seen as important or may be difficult to provide, for example designated parking (Kordovski et al., 2015). Many disabled individuals have stated that they feel they are being bullied in their place of employment (Fevre et al., 2013) and are subject to pressure to perform their job role at an unsustainable level due to a lack of understanding from employers (Roulstone and Williams, 2014; Baumberg, 2015). Some scholars have found that in order to overcome issues experienced in employment, many disabled women (and men) chose to change careers or changed jobs to a location or job role more suitable for their disability (Baumberg, 2015; Duffy and Dik, 2009). Additionally women also face further issues (Streets and Major, 2014), as they generally experience tougher realities in balancing work and family commitments (Anderson et al., 2010; Jyrkinen and McKie, 2012), and struggle to gain promotion in male dominated fields (Cook and Glass, 2014; Sealy, 2010). Whilst these studies are not representative of the entire labour market, as they are relatively small qualitative studies with small samples, they do illustrate some of the common barriers faced by both women and disabled workers.

2.4. External Support

When disabled individuals seek employment not only can they receive support from their employers, they can also receive support from government and charitable organisations. In the U.K., charities such as the Shaw Trust help and support individuals in developing skills and aid in finding appropriate jobs to apply for. Individuals with disabilities are now largely responsible for finding employment on their own, although they can receive financial bursaries to help with the transition to employment. For example, Access to Work (*Access to Work*, 2015) is a government scheme which can financially assist employers to make accommodations in the workplace, or provide money to help disabled individuals to physically get to their place of employment, for example paying for taxi fees (*Access to Work*, 2015). However, the Sayce (2011) report dubbed this the ‘Government’s best-kept secret’ (p. 14) which is an indication of how underutilised it is. Despite the available schemes, there are fewer resources provided by the government, there are continuous reductions in benefits, and there is a lack of support systems available (Harwood, 2014; Cross, 2013; HM Treasury and UK National Statistics, 2013; Lymbery, 2012).

Cross (2013) writes an informative article from the perspective of disabled individuals concerning the recent changes to government policies and benefits for disabled individuals. A strength of this article is that she writes on her own experiences of being disabled and the government support system, demonstrating how individuals are suffering because of the decisions of policymakers. The consequences of the government’s financial cutbacks include restricting entitlement to certain benefits, such as the Disability Living Allowance (DLA). Cross (2013) aptly states ‘since Esther McVey has, it seems, already decided that around 600,000 people should lose their DLA, this means that vast numbers of people will lose the qualifying award to receive a car on the mobility scheme’ (p. 722), directly affecting those who depend on a car to get

to work. Changes such as those discussed above can have a profound psychological effect: Cross illustrates that ‘many of us are scared to be seen managing to get about, as if this is somehow a criminal activity proving we were cheats all along’ (Cross, 2013, p. 722).

2.5. Summary

This chapter has reviewed relevant literature that considers the experiences of disabled women and has demonstrated the impact of feminist research, which has identified how disabled women’s minority social identity negatively impacts their everyday experiences. The section exploring the recent intersectionality research of gender and disability, has identified that disabled women are more likely to experience: psychological distress, harassment in the workplace, multiple socio-economic disadvantage, and be subject to a lower wage than women without a disability and disabled men. The second section reviewed literature that explores issues and barriers experienced by women and disabled individuals during the recruitment processes and once employment has been secured. Finally the last section considered external support from the government and the impact recent changes in benefits and reduction in financial support has had on disabled women’s experiences. The next chapter will focus on the methodology and how the research project was carried out and then analysed.

Chapter 3: Methodology

This chapter revisits the objectives of the research stated at the end of chapter one, and then discusses key components of this research including: research design, sample selection, a description of the research participants, and important ethical considerations will also be discussed. Furthermore, the interview schedule which was used is discussed, which is followed by the discussion of the specific research procedures followed to conduct this research. Finally the method chosen to analyse the obtained data will be discussed in terms of its suitability and how the data was analysed.

3.1. Objectives revisited

As discussed in the previous chapters there is very little research that has focused primarily on disabled women's experiences in employment. To reiterate, the current research aims to explore the intersection of gender and disability identities to enhance our understanding of disabled women's employment experiences in the UK. This study's objectives are to explore:

1. The specific issues and experiences of women with disabilities during recruitment processes and what impact these experiences have,
2. The specific issues and experiences of women with disabilities once employment has been secured and what impact these experiences have,
3. What support is available for women with disabilities in employment and what support is needed by them.

3.2. Research design

Prior research on gender and disability is largely quantitative, however this research aims to move beyond quantifying attitudes or identifying employment statistics, such as the number of harassment claims. Therefore, this research is best suited to be a qualitative design as it seeks to explore personal experiences. This requires in-depth

information from the target sample of women with a physical disability. Furthermore, this research is interested in how individuals construct their own experiences within a particular socio-contextual environment (i.e. their place of employment).

This research takes an interpretive approach and adopts a social constructionist epistemology which argues that meanings of reality are constructed by us as human beings, and is subjective to cultural, historical, and personal influences (Easterby-Smith, 2008, p. 58; Burr, 2015, p. 9). This approach aims 'to obtain thick description and as much detailed information as possible about people's lives' (Snape and Spencer, 2009, p. 21). This information is collected from the perspective of the individual participant and is then interpreted by the researcher. Some argue this is a subjective analysis relying on the quality of the data collected in comparison to rigorous positivist methods of data collection and analysis to find statistical significances (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007, p. 7). However, in order to expand our knowledge of women with disability in the workplace it is vital that we understand their personal experiences and their understanding of whether their disability and gender is related to their experiences. The insights gained will allow for suggestions for change and support, and allow for future researchers to have a base knowledge to expand upon.

Semi-structured interviews were used to explore disabled women's experiences, as this was the most appropriate way to collect in-depth data, such as beliefs or opinions that are personal to participants (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008, p. 145). Qualitative interviews (i.e. semi-structured interviews) have been found to be beneficial when investigating topics that are more sensitive in nature than alternative methods of data collection, such as surveys (Wolgemuth et al., 2015, p. 354). Furthermore semi-structured interviews allow for the participant's experiences and beliefs to be reconstructed (Ritchie, 2009, p.

36) with the interviewer who can probe or ask further questions to fully explore the factors that ‘underpin participants answers’ (Legard et al., 2009, p. 141).

3.3. Sample selection

The purpose of this small research project is to be the first, exploratory phase of a much larger PhD project. It allows for the area of gender, disability and employment to be explored and allows for the development of interview skills and providing an opportunity to ascertain if additional questions need to be asked in the larger PhD project. Due to the small time frame available for the project the sample size is relatively small ($n = 7$), but this is sufficient to explore the issues and experiences generated from the interview data and for them to be further investigated in subsequent studies. The interview participants who were invited to take part in this research were women over 18 who have either a mental or physical disability and are in paid employment. Potential participants were approached by either an advertisement in a disability forum (disability sanctuary) or via advertisements placed online on the social network site Facebook (Appendix 1). Following a snowball technique people who replied to the advertisement on social media then forwarded it on to relevant individuals, who then self-selected to take part (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008; p. 218).

The advertisements for research participants asked for women who have either a mental condition or a physical disability (see Appendix 1). All participants are self-selected and informed the researcher of their willingness to take part by email. The women who responded to the advertisement were then asked if they were willing to have an interview with myself and correspondence was exchanged to arrange a suitable time and medium for the interview.

3.4. Participants

All seven women who were interviewed had a physical disability. They were aged between 29 and 57 and the types of physical disability include a wide variety of physical ailments, such as Crohn's disease, spina bifida, back problem (due to an injury), rheumatoid arthritis, multiple sclerosis, or physical impairments from illness such as polio. Some of the women also mentioned additional mental health conditions occurring as a result of their disability and environmental factors, such as stress and depression. Not all the women were currently employed; three of the women were recently retired (two within a few months, and one within two years). Their previous job roles included working in the Human Resource (HR) education department for a Scottish city council, a senior lecturer, and a radiographer. One of the women was currently volunteering as a teaching assistant, whilst obtaining a further teaching qualification, but had recently worked in an organisation as team leader. The remaining women were a sales assistant in the food industry, a National Health Service (NHS) nurse and an NHS health advisor. Table 1 below provides a comprehensive compilation of the demographic data:

Table 1: Demographics and additional information of sample.

NAME (pseudonym), and Geographical location	Interview Type	Age	Disability	Education	Employment type (discussed in interview and ordered oldest to recent)
Sarah, North west England.	Face-to- face	29	Spina bifida, Disabled in right leg, Hydrocephalus, Double vision (resulting from brain surgery), Hole in Bladder	GCSEs, NVQ in beauty therapy, Applying for teaching course.	Pub – working bar Office jobs Currently: Volunteering as teaching assistant
Linda, South Wales.	Phone	46	Multiple sclerosis (MS)	O-Levels, degree in veterinarian nursing, PGCE.	Veterinarian nurse, Teacher, NHS Radiographer, Early ill retirement, Volunteers with MS support group.
Sharon, North West England.	Face-to- face	49	Physically disabled – Slipped disks. pernicious anaemia, anaemia.	Basic GCSEs, NVQ in hairdressing.	Hairdresser, Driver, Bailiff, NHS Health advisor, Senior NHS health advisor, (volunteering: mental health club; work club –advice for disabled individuals)
Donna, North west England.	Face-to- face	57	Partial paralysis of right arm resulting from polio as a child	O-levels, NVQ – computers.	Sewer, Sales assistant
Judith, North West England.	Phone	57	Brest cancer treatment resulted in limited arm	Degree in nursing.	NHS nurse on Trauma ward, NHS Nurse on elective

			movement in right arm.		surgery ward,
Penny, North West England.	Face-to- face	53	Crohn's disease, Arthritis, Nerve damage in back.	BSc in Psychology, Masters and PhD in organisational Psychology.	Lecturer, Senior lecturer, Early ill Retirement.
Jennifer, Scotland.	Skype interview	41	Rheumatoid arthritis, Hip damage from operation.	Good standard grades (GCSE equivalent), Highers (A- levels), Degree in electrical engineering.	Electrical engineer, Office job, HR education department – Council, Early ill retirement.

3.5. Ethical considerations

As a researcher that does not have a first-hand experience of a disability, I heed the words of influential disabled women researchers (e.g. Morris) that my position and view of disability may influence my undertaking of this research. These scholars have been influential in their advice and guidance given to future researchers to carefully consider their position when conducting research, especially for researchers who do not have a disability. Morris (1993a) stresses that 'I don't think that I, or many other disabled women, want to read of non-disabled researchers analysing how awful our lives are because we 'suffer from' two modes of oppression' (p. 63). This demonstrates that there has been a bias in research to only focus on the stereotypical associated negative experiences, which only provides one half of a story and skews the understanding of disabled women's experiences. Although I have had extensive exposure to women who have disabilities, including my mother, I can only experience this from the outside.

Disability is a sensitive topic for discussion, which can cause researchers or participants to become distressed with some of the information given by participants (Bahn and Weatherill, 2012). Although this did not occur during any of the interviews, I was fully prepared to stop any of the interviews if any of the participants became obviously distressed. Having previous personal experience with disabled women, who have been in variable levels of distress due to their disability, provided a level of understanding and empathy during the interviews, and allowed for mental preparation for what may be discussed with participants (Dickson-Swift et al., 2009). There was one instance where one of the participants had been diagnosed with cancer within the last three years, so I was consciously aware that the experiences and the resulting disability were relatively new and she was likely to be still adjusting to the circumstances. Therefore, when it came to asking more personal reflection questions Judith (pseudonym) was told that she did not have to answer any question she was not happy or comfortable to answer.

Before any interview was started all the participants were asked to read the information sheet (Appendix 2) and sign the consent form after reading and agreeing to take part in the study (Appendix 3). The consent forms for the women who were interviewed on Skype or on the phone were all sent the information sheet and consent form ahead of time and were sent back in a prepaid postage envelope before the interviews took place. All participants were given a copy of the consent form to keep, and all relevant ethical considerations were adhered to according the British Psychological Society and the Open University's ethical regulations. All of the women were informed by the advertisement, information sheet, consent form, and in person verbally that all information collected would be strictly confidential and all names and places discussed would be anonymised. Furthermore they were told that they would be given pseudo names to protect their identity.

3.6. Interview schedule

An interview schedule (Appendix 4) was used to prompt the type of questions to ask regarding different aspects of employment which were also adapted depending on the flow of the conversation. Some of the interviews involved asking more questions based on the information given or to ask for more information based on something previously mentioned. Questions were on demographics; recruitment experiences; their experiences once in employment; their identity; and about any support they had received.

3.6. Research procedure

Of the seven interviews that were held two interviews were conducted as telephone interviews; one as a skype conference call with video enabled; two of the face-to-face interviews were carried out in a booked private room in a health centre; and the remaining two interviews were completed in the homes of the interviewees (who were known personally to the researcher). The interviews varied in length ranging from 23 minutes to just over an hour. Before any interviews were recorded all participants were again asked if they were willing to be recorded during the interview, all verbally consented and were again told that they did not have to disclose any information that would make them uncomfortable or were not happy to disclose.

In the majority of cases most of the women interviewed were very forthcoming and openly discussed their disability and their employment experiences. As discussed above my previous experience of relationships with disabled women and an awareness of the difficulties (emotional and physical) that individuals face with the onset of physical disability was very helpful and beneficial to the interviews. Some women were more inclined to give information than others, and some women had more experiences and thus had more to share. Some of the women had similar experiences to other women

that I have known so this provided a talking point in the interviews. Others openly questioned if I had a disability and why I had chosen to look at women with disabilities; often my disclosure of information was received well and resulted in the interviewee giving more information (Vänäsantanen and Saarinen, 2013).

3.7. Data analysis

The method chosen to analyse the semi-structured interview data was thematic analysis, which is compatible with a social constructionist epistemology, and is a flexible analysis while still providing a rich and detailed account of the data (Braun and Clarke, 2006). As this is an exploratory study the use of thematic analysis allows for relevant patterns within the data to be drawn out by coding transcripts and then grouping these according to subthemes, and then identifying overarching themes. This allowed for any recurring themes and experiences across the whole sample to be highlighted, and thus emphasising if themes identified are largely attributed to individual or shared experiences in the workplace (Braun and Clarke, 2006). The analysis was conducted according to the six phases proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006): familiarisation of data, generate initial codes, search for themes, review of themes, and production of findings. The use of qualitative assistive software NVivo was used to code transcripts which was done on a line by line basis, for example on reading the transcripts once it became apparent that the participant was talking about workplace accommodations then that piece of text was sub-coded to accommodation, which was situated under a top code of employment. Initially many codes were produced, but were subsequently reviewed, and some data was re-coded if applicable to more than one code or a different code. During this stage initial ideas were written down on the themes within the coded data and were then revised. As discussed by Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 90) some of the initial codes went on to become themes, and other themes were created when multiple codes were applicable to one particular theme (see Appendix 5 for list of codes used).

The use of software such as NVivo allows for flexibility to manipulate and organise data: identified themes were evident either within one individual's interview (vertical), or across interviews (horizontal).

3.8. Summary

This qualitative research takes an interpretive approach and adopts a social constructionist epistemology in order to fulfil the research objectives. The self-selected sample was recruited via advertisements placed on social media sites, and all participants in this research were women over 18 years old with various types of physical disability. This chapter also discussed the ethical considerations associated with this research and the focus of the interview questions. Finally thematic analysis was discussed and how it was appropriate to analyse the data collected from the women. The following section will share and discuss the findings of the analysis described above.

Chapter 4: Findings and Discussion

This chapter will focus on presenting and discussing the findings of the thematic analysis of the seven semi-structured interviews held with the women, in order to allow for relevant discussion being attached to specific findings, the findings and discussion section has been intertwined. The semi-structured interview questions reflected the objectives of this research and were focused on recruitment, employment and then support which is the logical order that the findings are discussed below. The key themes to emerge, which were identified using thematic analysis, were discrimination, career change, accessibility to work environment, and finally support. This final theme emerged most strongly and will be discussed in two halves: support given, and support needed. There is no specific section in this chapter which discusses intersectionality as the findings demonstrate that intersecting identities are woven throughout the themes identified.

4.1. Recruitment experiences

4.1.1. Discrimination

When the women were asked about their recruitment experiences some of the women believed that they had been discriminated against. Discrimination of a person's disability because of an unfounded concern over their ability to perform an occupational role can have significant consequences for those who are on the receiving end of the discrimination (Vedeler 2014; Brohan et al., 2012, 2014; Lindsay et al., 2014; Burke et al., 2013; Hall and Wilton, 2011; Harris et al., 2014). One of the women interviewed tried to gain employment and was fully qualified in beauty therapy, but a negative interview which focused on her disability and not her qualifications challenged her personal identity of being 'able'. This experience had a big impact and resulted in a career change after a period of melancholy:

'you know because that [is] the way they see it, but it does make you feel, I wouldn't say worthless, I didn't feel worthless, but I, I did feel like I'm not the same as everyone else, I passed the same exams as everybody else, I've got the same grades as everyone else...but yet for some reason, I'm not, entitled to try for that job... like the next person is, you know, and it's unfair, but like I said it was just that once, that made me feel like...that'

(Sarah, 29, spina bifida, double vision, hydrocephalus)

Though not explicitly mentioned by Sarah there may have been some form of discrimination occurring because her appearance was not of a 'normal' woman, as her disability was visible to others and this may have been seen to be a negative quality in a very appearance based profession (Howlett et al. 2015; Cavico et al. 2012). Furthermore, although Sarah believed she was capable of performing this role, the individual who interviewed Sarah had a different opinion on what a suitable applicant can do and looks like. Therefore Sarah's self-identity and the interviewer's projected social identity, and the specific socio-cultural environment of a spa where physical 'perfection' or physical attractiveness are strived for, are in conflict. This demonstrates how binary thinking (Knights, 2015) and developed schemas can negatively impact disabled women's experiences within socio-cultural environments such as seen above. This experience reflects what Morris (1991, p. 17) found in her and other women's experiences that prejudice and hidden assumptions about disabled individuals lives impacts everyday experiences. Because of this experience Sarah questioned her identity, which resulted in a massive rethink of her abilities and doubting her chances of being employed in her qualified area. Sarah *'chose then to leave that alone, and go into office work where really they couldn't doubt my disability, they couldn't question it so much*

because I were sat down', and stated her frustration at the waste of three years spent in college qualifying for something she was judged not able to do.

In contrast Penny applied to be a lecturer at a University in Wales in her qualified field and found that although her disclosed disability was not the issue, she suggests that:

'it was the fact that I was a woman that was the problem,... I didn't look like the panel who only had one woman ...of a panel of eight...and she was HR,...and they appointed someone who looked just like them, the other candidates there was a woman and there was a black male and they choose the white male,...which just looked like them.'

(Penny, 53, Crohn's disease, arthritis, nerve damage in the back)

Although this extract suggests that gender and disability did not interact, Penny claims that there was a favoured candidate, the white male, which could reflect prevailing patriarchy that occurs within higher occupational roles (Priola and Brannan, 2009). However this cannot be taken as fact but rather an indication of how Penny personally felt in the interview, which she reflected on by stating she did not look like *'them'*, as she was not a white male which was based on the visual representation of the interview panel. This perceived sexism has been shown to have a cognitive impact on women whilst trying to enter the workplace, and *'this phenomenon occurs when members of a minority group are aware of negative stereotype regarding their abilities'* (Streets and Major, 2014, p. 298). Therefore, the interaction of the socio-cultural environment, the perceived assumption of sexism, and importance of visual appearance such as gender or attractiveness, may have resulted in the belief that Penny and Sarah had been harshly judged in terms of their applicability for the job roles. This may indicate that disabled

women's experiences of trying to secure employment may be more difficult because of the conflicting self-identity versus social identities of the two intersecting minority identities. Although a larger sample would be needed to see if this was a common experience to give it more credibility.

Interestingly all the women bar one disclosed their disability to potential employers as they found that being dishonest could have more consequences than disclosure, such as not receiving accommodations they needed, being expected to work at unsustainable levels, and the strain accompanying pretending to be someone they were not. Linda who has MS argued that '*You don't disclose what you've got until you're offered the job*' as though her disability would provide reasonable doubt and impact her chances of being employed (Vedeler, 2014). This may have been in fear of discriminatory treatment and stereotypical attitudes, based on her social identity of a disabled woman, impacting her chances of employment (Jones and Latrielle, 2011). Interestingly Linda had some experiences of her employers not wanting to make accommodations and experienced discrimination but stated she could not '*disclose*' these incidents in the interview, these negative experiences may have been a result of her dishonesty and the fact that her employers had to make finically burdening accommodations which they should have been aware of in the hiring process (Kordovski et al., 2015), and there may have been a lack of understanding of her condition.

4.2. Employment experiences

4.2.1. Career change due to Impairment²

In exploring the women's employment history, career change was discussed by six of women interviewed and, in the majority of cases, their impairment was identified as a reason for their career change (Baumberg, 2015) as opposed to losing their jobs. These

² Impairment here is meant to mean the individual ailment that affects the women (otherwise written as their disability), as this section aims to link to the social relational model that suggest the impairment forms part of a disability

career changes varied from taking different roles within the same occupation to completely changing occupational fields, with varying degrees of impact on the women as a result. One of the more frequently cited reasons for career change was an inability to fully perform their job role as a result of their disability. Linda who has MS was asked if she was working at the time of her diagnosis and if she continued in that position, she replied:

'I carried on for around another 2 and a half, 3 years, then I moved to Cardiff, and then I started another one, did that for 3 years, ... I changed according to my disability.'

(Linda, 46, MS,)

She further elaborates later in the interview that her disability led her to feel 'guilty', and she left her veterinarian nursing behind when she '*stopped being able to handle the animals*'. This suggests that the decline in her ability to perform her job role negatively impacted her sense of self, which resulted in her changing her career to suit her physical abilities, demonstrating the importance of employment on self-identity (Bogart 2014; Dunn and Burcaw, 2013). Many of the women had similar stories to this one, which involved leaving behind their chosen career, some much earlier than others. Jennifer entered employment once fully qualified as an electrical engineer, but came to the realisation that her chosen career was beyond her capabilities:

'it was so much more manual labour that you were actually doing...they were expecting you to climb into the machine and fix...it,...although my mind was kind of technically minded that way, physically there was no way that I could be climbing up and amongst the machines'

(Jennifer, 41, Rheumatoid arthritis)

Jennifer stated that she was in a unique position in this particular field as she was *'not only working through your kind of female male kind of barriers, ...but I was also trying to deal with a disability as well'*. This shows how entering a male dominated profession can increase the perceived and experienced hardships of being a member to two minority identities (micro level) which put Jennifer at a greater disadvantage at 'the macro social structural level' (Bowleg, 2012, p. 1267) than one sole issue; although as shown her disability was arguably the more dominating factor for her career change. Similarly Sharon, 49, who slipped five disks in her lower back from an injury was a fully qualified hairdresser with a great passion for her job but regrettably had to change job for an office-based role as a result of her physical limitations. Both of these women were fully qualified in their chosen fields but had to completely change their careers from physical jobs to office-based jobs where they felt that their disability would not impact and would benefit from greater job security (Baumberg, 2015). Donna, 57, who has a disability as a result of polio as a child, is slightly different to the other women: *'I wanted to be an hairdresser when I left school but that did stop me from being a hairdresser because, I don't think I'd have been able to done it, holding my arm up that long trying to wash hair and styling'*. The findings supports Duffy and Dik's (2009) research which demonstrates that life circumstances can result in career changes especially when injuries which result in a disability need significant attention. As a result a person's disability may dictate which jobs and careers are accessible and available to them as opposed to their qualifications, goals, or personality (Duffy and Dik, 2009, p. 34).

The impact of these career changes ranged from frustration to depression, especially for the women who had spent time and effort in qualifying in an area they previously

believed would be open to them, or the realisation that their passion was no longer possible:

'I was kind of almost like starting from scratch, because I was like going back in at basics, so you know, I felt as if the whole of the education that I got was really a waste of time... because what I was doing, anyone could have come straight for school and done'

(Jennifer, 41, rheumatoid arthritis, damage to hip)

'you know when you do that thing that you fill the form in...of how you're depressed beforehand and how you're depressed, I was actually worse after,... it was the fact that I'd accepted that I couldn't do hairdressing anymore, so I wouldn't say I was more down...because it was an acceptance and that was when I started to think, of more positive and more useful things to do with my time'

(Sharon, 49, slipped disks, pernicious anaemia, anaemia)

These stories emphasise that not only are there barriers to employment from social attitudes as a result of discrimination, or a lack of support, but some disruption to employment stems from the impairment of the individuals. This supports the research of O'Sullivan et al. (2012), who argue that individuals who have to change career as a result of their disability and 'who was previously employed in an environment that promoted optimal personality expression for that individual may experience incongruity for the first time post disability' (p. 163). As can be seen in Sharon's case the disruption resulted in depressive symptoms but this was not entirely negative as it

prompted an acceptance of her condition and gave her the motivation to look forward into alternative employment options. However, it must be stressed that in any of the interviews the impairment is not solely attributed to the career change, in some cases there were multiple circumstances working together, but the deciding factor was the impact of the individual's ability to fulfil their specific job role. This fits with the social relational model of disability, as it demonstrates that the women's disabilities are not solely attributed to the attitudes of society (or employers), but highlights how an individual's impairment contributes to their disability and the disruption to employment (Reindal, 2009, p. 162). Although the women acknowledged their inability to perform their job role, by moving to a different job they maintained a positive concept of self with being able to fulfil the new job role regardless of gender or disability issues (Bogart 2014; Dunn and Burcaw, 2013).

4.2.2. Accessibility to work environment

Accessibility was another predominant theme that was found across the interviews: one of the precursors of successful employment regardless of the capability to fulfil the job role is the accessibility to the workplace environment. As will be discussed later in this chapter there are examples of accommodations being made in the workplace environment, such as desk changes or provision of equipment. Yet there were instances of offices being moved to unsuitable locations for the disabled individual, or having a job that was not based in a specific location but was constantly moving to different NHS settings within a specific district. These changes result in uncertainties and the constant movement meant that there were constant battles of accessibility, that would not impact 'able' bodied individuals, such as doors with security code locks with push buttons, or badges to open the security doors. Two of the women interviewed experienced such difficulties:

'we were originally in a younger building but they moved us in to the back of the city chambers, which is just an old Victorian building, ... full of swing door that had security passes on it, which was one the reasons why I hadn't managed to make it back right at the very start after my operation because there was no way I would have managed, because you have to swipe your badge to get through the swing doors, ...which you then had to push, you know so kinda trying to manage that on double crutches ...there was no chance'

(Jennifer, 41, rheumatoid arthritis)

'There has always been issues, and here it's getting into the room, it's that push button, it hurts ...every time I do it, then I'll push the wrong button on a regular basis, and then I have to do it again, so and I have to push the button to just go and get the photo copier, ...you know, stuff from there, it's not ideal'

(Sharon, 49, slipped disks, pernicious anaemia, anaemia)

It could be argued that this reflects the social model of disability as these difficulties are caused by limitations in society in terms of the structure of a building or the methods of security not been suitable for all individuals. It could also be argued that this is added to by the specific abilities of the individuals, both their conditions involve pain that is exacerbated by the structural limitations specific to them which acts as a form of social barrier (Thomas, 2006), reflecting the social relational model rather than the social model of disability (Palmer and Harley, 2012). Although preferable for inclusion of all individuals, it would be very hard for any organisation to fully consider the possible issues that individuals with disabilities may face, as there are so many different varieties of disabilities which impact people in different ways. However, as discussed in the

literature review, the government is openly encouraging individuals with disabilities to seek work but at the same time reducing eligibility to specific benefit such as receiving a mobility car. Sharon stated that *'I get a car now so... if they take that off me in the next round of [disability benefit cuts], I don't know, well I'd have to give up my job'*, which demonstrates the importance of external financial support in being able to access employment (Cross, 2013).

4.3. Support

Support was a central theme that ran throughout the interviews as it incorporated so many aspects of their employment experiences ranging from accommodations, accessibility, work contacts, and hours worked. The level of support could vary within one individual's employment experience, for example: excellent co-worker support but very little management support, poor organisational support but excellent external support, or personal support originating from the disabled women themselves was also key in securing organisational support in some cases. Therefore for clarification the support has been separated into support given and lack of support, although they were intermixed in the interviews.

4.3.1. Support given: Accommodations

When asked if there were any accommodations needed in their place of employment to assist them, all seven women had some form of accommodation made for them in their jobs. This ranged from desk assessments being completed in order to have customised desks furnished, specific chairs for back support, head sets, or having a helper provided whilst at work. The women stressed that these accommodations were essential to completing their job role in a way that helped overcome some of the strain of their disability:

'the council has been relatively understanding in terms of the disability... they got the chair and ...a headset as well ...cos I couldn't last any length of time using a normal phone'

(Jennifer, 41, Rheumatoid arthritis)

Jennifer was an employee who had worked for the council for 18 years and during that time there were numerous accommodations needed, and met, as she progressed to more senior roles. The council took into consideration her abilities and limitations by ensuring there was a position available appropriate to her ability, although this meant negotiation on their behalf as she could only perform one half of the job role (the office based role) at the senior level. Linda also received excellent support from her employers when she first started with MS:

'when I was first diagnosed I was working for a vets in London,...and they were very supportive because with MS they won't diagnose until you have 2 relapses,...and [after] my first relapse...they did have to change my working an awful lot, to allow me to stay until I came up as a relapse, and that vet were brilliant.'

(Linda, 46, MS)

The two extracts above demonstrate that the employment experiences of women who have a disability can be made easier when employers work with the individual to provide flexibility and make accommodations to ensure they can fulfil their job role without unnecessary discomfort. However, not all the women experienced freely given support from their employers, Linda stated that there were issues with getting the accommodations she needed, although it should be reiterated that Linda did not disclose her disability when applying for her jobs.

Personal agency was sometimes key in securing support, especially when employers or co-workers had '*forgotten*' about the women's disability:

'if I ask someone if they will help me, they're fine about it, ... they'll just say 'don't lift that Donna I'll do it for ya', ... they know the situation so they just help me through it.

(Donna, 57, limited arm movement from polio)

'Yeah...well I wouldn't ask, I'd tell them,...confidence comes with knowledge of the system, and if you've got your knowledge you're fine'

(Sharon, 49, Slipped disks, pernicious anaemia, anaemia).

Having the confidence to ask for support may be crucial in maintaining a level of control in how much a person's disability affects their work, although this appears to be influenced by individual personality traits and a positive self-identity surrounding their disability as shown in the above interview extracts. Being open about their disability and asking for various levels of help supports O'Sullivan et al.'s (2012) research that personality traits, in particular openness and conscientiousness were found to be related to higher work-business efficacy, thus affecting the length of previous employment for disabled individuals.

4.3.2. Support needed: A lack of understanding

All the women interviewed experienced grievances which resulted from a lack of support from both organisational and external sources, but also from the absence of an understanding or a '*failure*' to try and understand the women's disabilities by their employers (Lindsay et al, 2014; Burke et al, 2013; Hall and Wilton, 2011). However, this is a complex issue as the women had different disabilities and of differing severity which needed different support. A lack of support caused Judith frustration, she was the

only woman interviewed to have recently acquired her disability, which was a result of surgery to remove her breast cancer in 2011. After returning to work as an NHS nurse she felt that she was only given a two week period to settle in to her previous role and after such time had passed she was not given further consideration from her managers:

'I don't think that they really understood at work... the nurses of the ward I've got to say, ...they have been very accommodating, the managers on the ward have not been so...They expect you to still perform the same... I just think they have just forgotten everything that's gone on.

(Judith, 57, limited right arm movement)

This lack of understanding or lack of empathy becomes even more evident when Judith explained that she felt she was being discriminated against by the amount of hours that she was being scheduled to work. She stated that she had informed her managers that working nights was not a good shift for her because of the side effects of the medication she has to take for five years once in remission from cancer (including night sweats and tiredness). She returned to work on a part-time 25 hours a week contract, yet she had recently been scheduled to work 106 hours in 13 consecutive night shifts, which also occurred the previous month. She argues that this has a major impact on her ability to perform her job role:

'and what annoys me, is they are ...not so much... endangering myself, but it's the patients that you are looking after, and you want to be nice and patient but when you are tired and stressed,...I don't think they are looking at that point of it, ... they've got to be more aware of that.'

(Judith, 57, Limited right arm movement)

This lack of understanding or consideration of how the women's disability impacted on their job was a common experience:

'if I have an off day if I'm aching or if I'm hurting...I didn't feel like I had that support...and I don't think there were an understanding there'.

(Sarah, 29, spina bifida)

'no I don't think they understand how tired you get... and you're in constant pain it never goes away'

(Sharon, 49, slipped disks)

'people don't realise that you get tired real easily and... if I was... going out to a meeting or...to different places...I'd be exhausted at the end of it, and if they were to ask me to do that several days in a row, I just wouldn't cope, you know,

(Jennifer, 41, rheumatoid arthritis)

'they never asked me to explain it,...even my head of department, he didn't really want to know what was wrong,... you're trying to cope with something that you don't even know what it is...the organisation was like ...we don't know either, so we won't do anything'

(Penny, 53, Crohn's disease, arthritis, nerve damage in the back)

These statements support some of the research findings in the literature review, as this lack of consideration adds pressure to perform at a constant level which in reality may not be possible (Roulstone and Williams, 2014). Interestingly, the quotes provided in

this section are interlaced with words which suggests that the disabled women are themselves reinforcing binary distinctions by referring to 'them' and 'they', reinforcing the differences between disabled and non-disabled individuals. This is linked with the issue of non-disabled individuals not understanding their disability, demonstrating a separation of disabled and non-disabled experiences. However, as Knights (2015) suggests norms of society are heavily ingrained in individuals, so the women may have instilled lived experiences of prejudice and inaccurate social identities which would reify binary distinctions even for disabled individuals. However the women were only discussing their disability when relating to their employment experiences and although many had female orientated roles, such as a nurse or a health advisor, gender was not really considered or discussed to have had an impact on their experiences. However, this may have been a result of how the questions were worded or a misinterpretation that they were only meant to discuss their disability. There were some instances where gender did intersect with their disability whilst in employment, for example two of the women interviewed that had back problems both became pregnant whilst in employment and this had a profound effect on their ability to perform their job role. In Sarah's particular case there was no consideration of how the pregnancy was impacting her disability within the workplace, nor was there any accommodations made:

'I'm 8 months pregnant, ...which an average normal person can struggle with...there should have been that help there for me, ...doctors thought by 6 months max, I'd be at home in bed...resting, I physically would not be able to carry a baby on my legs, my hips, my back for so long. And the bladder, and you know an average pregnant woman how many times does she go to toilet...I were there all the time, you know so, because I'd struggled with the steps or even the

ramp to get to the toilet, I were up and down there all day which didn't help'

(Sarah, 29, spina bifida, hydrocephalus, hole in bladder)

This demonstrates how both an individual's impairment and societal attitudes and behaviours interact to impact on their employment experience, which adds further support to the social relational model of disability. Sarah's spinal problems and the hole in her bladder made the common nuisances associated with pregnancy much more disruptive and more difficult from the added physical activity in having to repeatedly make a journey fraught with physical struggles. This was exacerbated by Sarah's line manager who was not willing to compromise by allowing her to work from home which is adapted for her personal needs, which would have resulted in a more productive working day. Although it should be stated that Sarah was a team leader and the line manager insisted that she needed to be there in the office to support and manage her team regardless. However, as Sarah explained in her interview, her line manager had been provided with evidence including a fit note³ from her doctors which said that Sarah needed to be put on lighter duties or needed to work from home, although as seen in the above quote this was not considered.

The findings identified above supports previous research that a lack of knowledge and low moral support can have a physical and emotional impact on work experience when managers or co-workers do not understand a person's disability (Lindsay et al., 2014). It also gives some supportive evidence that being a disabled woman can result in more negative everyday work experiences, which may be in addition to the economic disadvantage Woodhams et al. (2015a, 2015b) found in their exploration of wage differences for workers who have intersecting minority identities such as gender,

³ Previously known as a sick note

ethnicity and disability. Sarah also decided not to return to her post once her maternity leave finished, as she felt like she would not have the support there, and was worried about the stress endured previously with managing her disability on top of having a newborn to look after. This reflects the gender research which suggests the balance between work and family life is difficult to achieve (Anderson et al., 2010; Jyrkinen and McKie, 2012), but this is made more complicated because of the issues experienced because of a disability.

Suggestions for change

All the women were asked what type of support they would want from their employers and if they could suggest anything that might possibly improve their experiences of employment:

'I think ...people [need] to think differently about the way work's done, to think of a way of being more flexible ...I think people need to be a lot more tolerant, ... I don't know how you would change that in business, ... if the government were able to kind of offer tax breaks, humongous tax breaks or whatever to kind of encourage you know employers, to...have someone who doesn't necessarily give the same 100% out, although it's there 100% output, ...if I know what a lot of disabled people are like it will be more than their 100%, ...they will be doing 200%, and totally knocking themselves out to kind of keep, keep up with everybody else'

(Jennifer, 43, rheumatoid arthritis)

Communication was frequently cited by participants as an area that needed improvement. Furthermore, empathy and moral support from managers and colleagues, and not just material support, was often something the interviewees felt was lacking in

their workplace (Kirsh and McKee, 2003). Some of the women suggested that there was a distinct lack of communication between the government and organisations on what is available to support individuals with disabilities in the workplace:

'there wasn't enough information out there for what help you can get whilst in employment, ...but it wasn't their fault... there wasn't the information there, ...I had to find it myself, and the employers... didn't know about it either, ...they had lack of information themselves'

(Linda, 46, MS)

This reflects what research has previously found especially concerning what support is available to disabled individuals. As Sayce (2011) found Access to Work is the 'Government's best-kept secret' (p. 14), which has not been improved upon despite academic awareness of this issue. Similarly a number of the women emphasised the need for more communication between their place of employment and themselves, to better identify their specific needs and to keep up-to-date with their disability especially in deteriorating illnesses:

I think the managers should be doing a bit more to see what we have to do, ... and then they can evaluate exactly what other people can do'

(Judith, 57, limited use of right arm)

'I think from a management point of view they should be, getting to know you as a person, what kind of person you are, ... just to make you feel like if you are struggling there is support there'

(Sarah, 29, spina bifida)

'I'd have liked for somebody to actually be like a case worker, ...that kept in touch with me, ...looked at what was available and would've suited me, ...somebody else that knew...what's available to you!'

(Penny, 53, Crohn's disease, arthritis, nerve damage in the back)

Flexibility was seen to be crucial for the women who were employed as there were times at which making their way into their place of employment was difficult because of flare ups or when their condition resulted in deteriorating health. Although some of the women were able to work from home, because their work had a flexible working style, this was available to all employees and not specifically given to disabled workers.

One of the women suggested:

'is it possible to have more people working in their own homes ...and maybe still doing the same amount of hours, if not slightly more but at times they are able to manage, rather than the sort of like 9 to 5... where maybe it's not physically possible for them to do so many hours in one go'

(Jennifer, 41, rheumatoid arthritis)

As can be seen there are examples of support being given to women with disabilities but this was usually in the form of physical accommodations to the workspace environment: this support however did not expand into more moral and individual personal support. Many of the women were dealing with deteriorating conditions, meaning the support they needed would change over time, and many of the women experienced intermittent flare ups of their condition, such as pain levels, which meant that flexibility was an important facet, but this was not always freely given or available.

4.4. Summary

The thematic analysis identified numerous themes based on the experiences discussed in the interview data: 1) *discrimination* in recruitment processes, 2) *career changes* as a result of individual impairments, 3) *accessibility* to work environment, and 4) *support*, *which* was a central theme to emerge split between: a) *support given* which included accommodations and co-worker support, and b) *support needed* which centralised on the current lack of understanding and empathy the disabled women experienced in employment.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

This final chapter will give an overview of the findings of the study and discuss the theoretical and practical contributions of this research, the limitations of the research will be listed and suggestions for future research will be considered.

5.1. Overview of findings

The current research aimed to explore the intersection of gender and disability identities to enhance our understanding of disabled women's employment experiences in the UK. When considering identities it appears that a conflict exists between the disabled women's self-identity, of knowing they can perform a job role, and often inaccurate projected social-identities based on stereotypical assumptions of gender and disability. However, not all of the experiences were the result of identity per se, sometimes the impact of an individual's impairments was attributable to negative experiences, rather than consequences of projected stereotypical gender or disability social identities. One of the research objectives was to explore the specific issues and experiences of women with disabilities during the recruitment processes and what impact these experiences have. The main issue identified by the thematic analysis was that the disabled women experienced, or feared, discrimination when trying to enter employment based on their gender and disability. The impact of experiencing, or fearing, discrimination resulted in frustration and career changes, or choosing not to disclose to employers when applying for jobs. Discrimination appeared to be more apparent for a visible physical disability when applying to work in a feminine based profession, where appearance was deemed to be important.

The second research objective was to explore the specific issues and experiences of women with disabilities once employment has been secured and what impact those experiences had. The thematic analysis revealed that once in employment many of the

women discussed changing careers due to individual impairment and environmental factors negatively impacting their ability to fulfil their job role. Changing career or job demonstrated the importance of employment to women with disabilities, as many of them could have been supported financially with disability benefits, but all had a desire to work despite the limitations resulting from their disabilities.

The final objective was to explore what support is available for women with disabilities in employment and what support is needed by them. The analysis found that the support currently given to the disabled women interviewed was largely material accommodations, such as providing office equipment, and most of the women had supportive co-workers. However, moral support and empathy was found to be lacking in all but one of the women's experiences, and even in the one exception there were instances of forgetfulness about their physical needs resulting in accessibility issues. For many of the women interviewed, the accommodations provided made fulfilling the job role easier increasing work satisfaction, in contrast those who identified a lack of support reported reduced work satisfaction. To overcome the issues experienced, the disabled women interviewed felt like they needed more flexibility, such as working from home, and more empathy and understanding from employers.

5.2. Contributions of research

This research has contributed to the literature on gender and disability by exploring the personal micro experiences of disabled women within the socio-cultural (macro) environment of employment. The findings provide a better understanding of some of the everyday employment experiences for disabled women, although this is based on a very small sample it nonetheless provides a foundation for future research. This research has also added to the theoretical framework of intersectionality, the findings show that there is a conflict between self-identity and social identity pertaining to the intersecting

identities of gender and disability within various socio-cultural environments. Specifically this research finds that visual cues of an identity, where a physically disabled individual looks different to a non-disabled individual, can result in negative experiences of recruitment or employment, especially in appearance based professions such as beauty therapy. For other women whose disability were not as visible the previous finding were reversed. This occurred when disabled women found that they were not always openly discriminated against, but there were instances where the impact of gender and disability were not considered by employers and thus a lack of support was evident. This suggests that the women were being discriminated against implicitly because they were not receiving the support needed to be placed on an equal footing with their co-workers who were not disabled.

Not all of the women interviewed viewed themselves as being disabled, they have said they either had an impairment or even had a disability but indicated they did not self-identify with non-disabled people's views of being disabled, which were much more likely to be stereotypical assumptions and inaccurate perceptions of the women's capabilities and views of themselves within the workplace. This could suggest why women choose not to disclose that they have a disability when entering the workplace to avoid the impact of two intersecting social identities that can result in discrimination. Additionally the women suggested that the physical strain and exhaustion that accompanied working was compensated by improvements to their concept of self, which was derived from the enjoyment and mental stimulation of their job role. The issue of disabled women's views about disability has been brought out by this research and as far as I am aware, based on the literature review undertaken for this dissertation, no one has looked at the impact of women's views of disability on their work experience.

The findings may also be of relevance to Government or organisations with the desire to implement future support services for disabled individuals. Support was a dominant theme to emerge and was found to significantly impact, both positively and negatively, disabled women's experiences of recruitment and employment.

5.3. Limitations of this research

As already briefly mentioned one of the major limitations of this research was the very small sample size ($n = 7$), which limits the credibility of the findings. A second limitation of this research is that gender appears to have an implicit effect on disabled women's experiences of employment, although this was not drawn out by the interview questions asked to participants and is inferred based on the data available. Although this does not mean that gender was not a factor it suggests that future research would need to explore this more carefully, and more effort would be needed to try and draw on gender in subsequent interviews. As with other intersectionality research this study has only looked at two particular identities, gender and disability, and has not considered how additional identities such as race, class, or religion could have intersected with gender and disability to impact their experiences.

5.4. Future research

Future research needs to try to draw out more gender experiences as many of the women did not openly discuss their gender when discussing their employment experiences, although this may be in part down to the questions asked which focused on drawing out the women's experiences surrounding their disability. There were some instances of gender and disability intersecting to increase the disadvantage experienced within the workplace although this is dependent on the situation. For example, Sarah's pregnancy added more physical strain and pain on top of her disability which was not accommodated for by the provision of additional support by her manager. However,

most of the women did not consider their disability to be affected by their gender, nor did they indicate their gender impacted their employment experiences. It should also be taken into consideration that the findings may have been influenced by the type of employment that the women were in, i.e. the majority of the women were in traditionally female orientated roles so gender issues may not be as apparent as they would be if they were working with and in competition with male colleagues. Additionally, support was found to be of significance to all of the women interviewed and is an area in need of additional attention in future research, as most women identified various support systems that needed development based on the issues they discussed.

These aforementioned issues on gender identity inclusion and support will be taken into consideration in a larger research project in the form of my PhD Thesis, which will entail a deeper and more thorough analysis of the data collected. This will include a larger sample and include a range of different employment histories, a wider disparity of ages, and to consider other disabilities such as mental conditions or intellectual disabilities. More women with disabilities need to be included from organisations where there is more of an equal ratio of male to female employees, and organisations which are female dominated, and occupations which are male dominated, in order to explore the role of gender more thoroughly. Only with these considerations can we attempt to further our understanding of the impact of the intersection of gender and disability within the socio-cultural employment environment.

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Appendix

Appendix 1: Recruitment information for forums and social media

An exploration of gender and disability in the workplace

What the research is about:

I am a researcher from The Open University and my research is about exploring gender and disability in the workplace within the United Kingdom (UK). In particular I want to find out about women who have a mental condition or a physical disability and their experiences surrounding employment.

What is required from you?

In order to find out about your experiences an interview with me will be conducted focusing on your experiences of seeking work, experiences you have had in the workplace, and your views about what should be done to encourage more women with disabilities to work. The interview will ask questions surround disability so you should to be open to discuss your mental condition or your physical disability to avoid feeling uncomfortable.

Your rights when taking part:

Once you have agreed to take part in the research and are happy to have an interview with myself, at any point during the interview you wish to stop you may do so. As a participant you have the right to withdraw and prevent me from using any data I will have collected. Should you feel uncomfortable with any of the questions that are being asked you may decide if you would like to answer or not. You decide how much information you tell me and you do not have to tell me any information that would make you uncomfortable.

All data collected will be confidential and will be anonymised so any data in my dissertation will not be able to be traced back to you.

Afterwards, you still have the right to withdraw your data for one month after you have had the interview, after this the data will become anonymised so I would not know which interview is linked to you. You will have the opportunity to receive a copy of the findings from the research should you be interested.

Please send an email if you are interested in taking part in the research, or have any questions about the research.

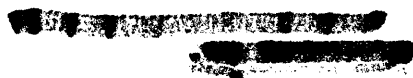
Thank you very much for your time to consider taking part in this research.

Gemma Wright.

Post-Graduate Research Student

Email: [REDACTED]

Tel: [REDACTED]



Appendix 2: Information sheet given to participants

An exploration of gender and disability in the workplace

What the research is about:

The research is about exploring gender and disability in the workplace. In particular I want to find out about women who have a mental condition or a physical disability and their experiences surrounding employment.

What is required from you?

In order to find out about your experiences an interview with me will be conducted focusing on your experiences of seeking work, experiences you have had in the workplace, and your views about what should be done to encourage more women with disabilities to work. The interview will ask questions surround disability so you should to be open to discuss your mental condition or your physical disability to avoid feeling uncomfortable.

Your rights when taking part:

Once you have agreed to take part in the research and are happy to have an interview with myself, at any point during the interview you wish to stop you may do so. As a participant you have the right to withdraw and prevent me from using any data I will have collected. Should you feel uncomfortable with any of the questions that are being asked you may decide if you would like to answer or not. You decide how much information you tell me and you do not have to tell me any information that would make you uncomfortable.

All data collected will be confidential and will be anonymised so any data in my dissertation will not be able to be traced back to you.

Afterwards, you still have the right to withdraw your data for one month after you have had the interview, after this the data will become anonymised so I would not know which interview is linked to you. You will have the opportunity to receive a copy of the findings from the research should you be interested.

Thank you very much for your time to take part in this research.

Gemma.

Appendix 3: Consent form



Department of People and Organisations

Consent form for persons participating in a research project

An exploration of gender and disability in the workplace

Name of participant: _____

Name of principal investigator(s): Gemma Wright _____

1. I consent to participate in this project, the details of which have been explained to me, and I have been provided with a written statement in plain language to keep.
2. I understand that my participation will involve taking part in an interview(s) which will be recorded by Gemma Wright and I agree that the researcher may use the results as described in the plain language statement.
3. I acknowledge that:
 - (a) the possible effects of participating in this research have been explained to my satisfaction;
 - (b) I have been informed that I am free to withdraw from the project at any time without explanation or prejudice and to withdraw any unprocessed data I have provided;
 - (c) the project is for the purpose of research;
 - (d) I have been informed that the confidentiality of the information I provide will be safeguarded subject to any legal requirements;
 - (e) I have been informed that with my consent the data generated will be stored on The Open Universities secure server and on encrypted pen drives and will be destroyed after five years;

(f) if necessary any data from me will be referred to by a pseudonym in any publications arising from the research;

(g) I have been informed that a summary copy of the research findings will be forwarded to me, should I request this.

I consent to any interview(s) with Gemma Wright being audio-taped

☐ yes ☐ no

(please tick)

I wish to receive a copy of the summary project report on research findings

☐ yes ☐ no

(please tick)

Please give your details of the preferred way to receive a copy of the research findings (email address or home address)

Participant signature:

Date:

Gemma Wright (Main researcher)
The Open University
Business School
Michael Young Building
Wing D1
Walton Hall
Milton Keynes,
MK7 6AA.
Email: [REDACTED]
Tel: [REDACTED]

Dr Cinzia Priola (Research supervisor)
The Open University
Business School
Michael Young Building
Wing C2
Walton Hall

[REDACTED]

Appendix 4: Interview schedule

Demographics

1. Would you tell me a little bit about yourself, so how old you are and some information about your disability?
2. Tell me about your family background i.e. are they married or cohabiting? Any children?
3. What is your education background i.e. qualifications?

Recruitment

4. Do you generally feel confident in applying for jobs?
 - a. *can you think about examples (i.e. when you felt confident and when you didn't)*
5. On an application form how would you describe yourself in terms of your disability?
6. For your current or latest employment do you think you have been discriminated against?
 - b. *how have you experienced the discrimination*
 - c. *why have you been discriminated against – being a woman, disabled, or both.*
7. Have you ever experienced discrimination when trying to get a job?
 - a. *Did you disclose that you had a disability?*
8. Were your colleagues aware that you have a disability?
 - a. *Did or does your disability impact any colleagues when you work?*
 - b. *Is it still an issue now?*
9. During any of your previous employment history have you experienced any issues in either gaining employment or whilst in employment?
 - a. *What did you do in your previous employment?*
 - b. *Why did you stop working there?*
10. Is there anything you want to say about your experience of seeking employment?

Employment

11. How did you come to work at your current job?
 - a. How long have you worked at in your current job?
 - b. What does your job role entail?

- c. have any adjustments been made at work?*
 - d. Was your wage the same as other employees in same or similar positions?*
- 12. How many jobs have you had?
- 13. Describe a typical day when you come to work?
 - a. What do you enjoy about your job
 - b. Do you find anything difficult about your job?
- 14. How do you feel about your job?
- 15. Do others that you work with help you with any issues you may experience in day to day activities?
- 16. Do you feel your disability has hindered your career progression in your current job or somewhere else?
 - a. Do you feel having a disability has any impact on your job, or your future aspirations?
 - i. why?
 - ii. How does it impact?
- 17. Do you feel people understand your disability?
- 18. Do people treat you differently because of your disability?
 - d. any particularly good or bad experiences*
 - a. Does it depend on the situation?*
 - i. Employment, home, parenting
- 19. Do you think that having a disability has an impact how you see yourself?
 - e. Can you be more specific?*
- 20. Are you treated differently from other women because of your disability?
- 21. In your experience are women treated the same as men in your current employment?
 - f. Are there any exceptions to this?*
 - g. Are there specific roles assigned to men and women?*
- 22. Does anyone else work in the organisation also have a disability (physical, mental, intellectual, illness etc)
 - a. Do you think they are treated differently because of their disability or gender?*
- 23. How has your job affected your general confidence in interacting with others at work and outside of work?

Are you aware of the disability legislation for example anti-discrimination acts?

Support

24. Do you feel like you have enough help and support in your current employment should you need or want it?
- h. If yes, what really helps you?*
 - i. Is there any particular type of support that you want from them?*
 - j. do you feel comfortable asking for support if you needed it?*
 - k. what would you do if you didn't get the support you needed?*
 - l. What type of support would be most beneficial to you?*
25. do you have a specific contact in the workplace who gives you support and advice?
26. Do you feel like you have enough support outside of work such as from your family and friends?
- a. If yes, what really helps you?*
 - b. Is there any particular type of support that you want from them?*
 - c. do you feel comfortable asking for support if you needed it?*
 - d. What type of support would be most beneficial to you?*
27. What do you think your organisation/employer does enough to employ people with disabilities?
- m. Do they do enough to support workers with a disability in career progression?*
28. Finally is there anything you would like to add about your life, your work, or on anything that I have not asked such as any more examples of experiences. And is there anything you would like to ask me about the interview.

Notes:

Appendix 5: Initial codes and sub-codes used to code transcripts

1: Bullying

2: Career change

3: Career progression

4: Disability

Acceptance (of disability)

Blame (blame assigned to disability)

Disruption (to daily activities)

5: Discrimination

6: Education

Accessibility

Lack of understanding

7: Employment

Accessibility

Accommodations

Disclosure to colleagues

Effort

Enjoyment

Inclusion

Lack of understanding

Legislation

Procedures

Role fulfilment

Time off

8: Equality

9: Family and friends (reference to individuals in text)

10: Gender

11: Goals

12: Humour

13: Self-identity

14: Social Identity

15: Independence

Gemma Wright

16: Normal (reference to being normal)

17: Personality

18: predictions of change

19: Recruitment

Disclosure (of disability)

20: Relationships

21: Retirement

22: Security (job security)

23: Stress

24: Support given

External

Family and friends

Organisation

Personal

25: Support needed or wanted

External

Family

Organisation

Personal agency